

Forest Conservation Advisory Committee

Minutes

January 6, 2009

Prepared by: Caren Madsen

ATTENDEES

Members

Rick Brush
Andrew Der
Jim Hubbard
Daniel Lyons
Caren Madsen
Joshua Maisel
Norman Mease
Anne Merwin, chair
Laura Miller (DEP), ex officio
Mark Pfefferle (M-NCPPC), ex officio
Dave Plummer (MSCD), ex officio
Jeff Schwartz
Linda Silversmith
Clark Wagner

Absent members

Ginny Barnes
Victor Bonilla
Pamela Browning
Edward Dress (WSSC), ex officio
John Jessen
Dan Landry
Brett Linkletter (DPWT), ex officio

Others attending

Dan Moone

MINUTES

Administrative items covered: The meeting convened at 7:15 p.m. with an update of the FCAC vacancies as the first order of business. Committee members whose terms are expiring received e-mail notices from the County Executive's office. The vacancy announcement from Mr. Leggett's office was provided to the group. It was noted that a notice was posted in the Izaak Walton newsletter and would soon be on the Potomac Conservancy web site as well.

Rick Brush was named recently as the Department of Permitting Services representative to the FCAC. There were brief introductions around the room so that Rick had an opportunity to learn who all committee members are and what role they fulfill.

A weather policy was discussed and the committee will follow the MCPS policy for school closings. Committee members suggested that on occasion the FCAC may meet when schools are closed and we may need to address that on a case by case basis.

We went over the 2009 meeting schedule and agreed that the 4th Tuesday will be the regular meeting time. Dates for future meetings are:

Feb. 24
March 24
April 28
May 26
June 23
July 28
No August meeting
Sept. 22
Oct. 27
Nov. 17
No December meeting

There was a discussion of the annual County Executive's meeting to have advisory committees report on progress the committees are making. Several members volunteered to attend the CE's meeting.

An optional ethics meeting was mentioned. There has been some question of committee attendance. The county law for advisory committees states that members can only miss up to three meetings a year. The Chair asked if the FCAC could let her know about future attendance concerns. She did not monitor attendance last year when the committee was getting started.

A discussion of a selection for the Vice Chair position followed. The group agreed to nominate by vote through email and then take a final vote on just the top two choices for the Vice Chair. The nominations and final votes will be taken electronically through the SurveyMonkey.

Montgomery County Sustainability Working Group (SWG) – discussion ensued of how the FCAC should address the recommendations which were to be issued to the County Executive's office on Jan. 15. An overview and some background on the work of the SWG were provided. The SWG first met in September and kept an ambitious schedule and goal of creating a climate change action plan. The working group was broken up into subcommittees, including one dealing with forestry/tree conservation and agriculture. The result of the SWG work was 57 recommendations on renewable energy, energy efficiency for residential and commercial development, transportation, forestry and agriculture, outreach and land use planning. It was noted that there is no budget to carry out the recommendations with the exception of energy-efficient building and rapid transit already slated for some county funding.

It was noted that the recommendations for forestry and agriculture are worth looking into for possible support from the FCAC. A copy of the SWG recommendations on forestry and agriculture was handed out to the FCAC but the committee had not had an opportunity to review them. An inquiry was made as to whether progress on the FCL amendments had been delayed because of the SWG. Although the FCL amendments seem stalled right now, the work of the

SWG did not have any bearing on the delays. It was reported that a bigger compromise FCL bill might be in the works and could result in a compromise between the Council and the County Executive's office – the amendments are in a temporary holding pattern waiting for the CE's office and the Council to hash through some of the items in need of compromise.

The members asked if consideration been given to measuring the net improvements based on the SWG recommendations. The FCAC could take up the related recommendations as issues to review. The FCAC could meet with the SWG Forest and Ag Subcommittee and talk about the recommendations. We discussed opening goals and the vision stated by the SWG and said the FCAC and the related subcommittee of the SWG should look for areas where there is overlap. We agreed to invite members of the SWG subcommittee to our next FCAC meeting on Feb. 24. **ACTION ITEM:** Laura is to invite the Forestry and Ag SWG subcommittee to our next meeting.

It was suggested that the SWG might be advised to make their tree and forestry recommendations a priority in implementation of their plan. The group discussed sending a note or letter to the SWG to ask that the SWG consider tree and forest preservation as priorities among their recommendations since tree preservation is a cost-effective way of dealing with greenhouse gas emissions, atmospheric deposition as well as natural sinks and filters for urban stormwater runoff. A motion passed to send a note to Bob Hoyt, DEP Director to be disseminated to the SWG. **ACTION ITEM:** Anne is to send an email note.

Brainstorming on FCAC work for 2009: The committee discussed the following potential projects to undertake:

- One of the first ideas would be for the FCAC to sponsor a *Woods in Your Back Yard* forest stewardship education workshop along with the Izaak Walton League. **ACTION ITEM:** DEP Staff will follow up with about scheduling and setting up such an event and how the committee might co-sponsor with IWL. The IWL has 567 acres in Poolesville that could be available as a site. If the first workshop was successful, we might want to have a second workshop at a county location.
- Another idea is for the FCAC to go out and take a few field trips around the county to get a first-hand look at good or badly forested land. Touring reforestation projects around the county might be useful for the committee. Several members may have clients who might be willing to have the committee look at what has been done on their sites. The FCAC members present liked the idea of combining a field trip or site tour with one of our regular meetings. The committee made preliminary arrangements for touring some IWL land for the April meeting and then a separate reforestation tour on the afternoon of the May meeting.
- Another idea was to have a guest speaker from the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) come to talk to our committee about how the State Forest Conservation Act is working throughout the state, and how the County FCL fits into the state law and other state programs. **ACTION ITEM:** Laura is to invite this speaker to the next meeting.

- An additional idea was to have a FCAC meeting or speaker to highlight how the State Roadside Tree law will be revised and what the impact will be on Montgomery County. **ACTION ITEM:** Laura is to invite the DNR speaker to address this issue as well.
- A committee member raised the possibility of having a speaker from Frederick County come and talk about the Frederick tree canopy goals and how they could translate to a similar Montgomery County effort. **ACTION ITEM:** Anne is to invite this speaker to the next meeting.
- All agreed that a discussion of the impact of invasive species on trees would be helpful at some point in the year.
- Public education and outreach was another idea brainstormed as a task for our committee. We touched on how our committee could try to enhance outreach and education on tree preservation.
- Ways to improve existing laws and regulations was noted as something the FCAC should pay attention to on an ongoing basis.
- Enforcement of forestry and tree laws and the need for better enforcement of the FCL was brought up as a potential topic for the FCAC to highlight in 2009. The group was in favor of taking up the issues of encroachment and enforcement throughout the county.
- It was suggested that the FCAC might look into sponsoring a tree planting day such as the annual Acts of Charity day that Winchester Homes sponsors. This particular event (where Winchester Homes sends out 150-200 employees to plant trees) has been tremendous. This was discussed as a potential fall effort for involvement by our committee.
- Another suggestion is to discuss avenues to further GIS-mapping goals for planting areas. He said a “Public Lands Restoration/Reforestation Data Base (or Map)” would be helpful in implementing successful replanting programs.

The committee adjourned around 9:00 p.m. with the Chair agreeing to follow up by sending the FCAC a draft of the note to the Sustainability Working Group and an electronic solicitation for Vice Chair nominations.

Review of Action Items

ACTION ITEM: Laura is to invite the Forestry and Ag SWG subcommittee to our next meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Anne is to send an email note to Bob Hoyt.

ACTION ITEM: DEP Staff will follow up with about scheduling and setting up such an event and how the committee might co-sponsor with IWL.

ACTION ITEM: Laura is to invite DNR rep to the next meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Laura is to invite the DNR speaker to address this issue as well.

ACTION ITEM: Anne is to invite Frederick County School Tree Canopy speaker to the next meeting.